

# Ensign Calls on Bush and Gonzales to Restore Bogen's Reputation

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WASHINGTON -- Although he stopped short of calling for the resignation of Attorney General Alberto Gonzales, Republican Sen. John Ensign of Nevada on Tuesday said Gonzales "completely mishandled" the firing of U.S. Attorney Daniel Bogden of Nevada.

Ensign also called on President Bush and Gonzales to "restore Dan Bogden's reputation."

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid of Nevada said Gonzales should resign.

After meeting Friday with Gonzales and talking to him again Tuesday morning on the phone, Ensign said the attorney general assured him the Justice Department is revamping its method of reviewing U.S. attorneys.

"He said that the process has been in place for decades. I think that's a poor excuse," Ensign said. "Whenever you take over something, if something's being done wrong, it's your responsibility to fix it."

But Ensign reserved most of his wrath for Deputy Attorney General Paul McNulty, who notified him in December that Bogden would be terminated.

Ensign charged McNulty either intentionally misled him or was misinformed "and it seems more like the latter."

In the past 10 days, Ensign said McNulty told him Bogden was fired because he was not aggressive in prosecuting adult obscenity and terrorism.

But no one from the Justice Department ever told Bogden he should change his priorities.

"A complete lack of management oversight had been exhibited by the deputy attorney general, who is the direct supervisor for the U.S. attorneys," Ensign said. "I was flabbergasted when I heard this," Ensign said. "I'm not a person who raises his voice very often. My staff could hear the frustration that I expressed to Paul McNulty when he first informed me that not a single conversation had been had between him or any of the previous deputy attorney generals with Dan as far as his priorities were concerned."

Ensign said he told McNulty the Department of Homeland Security last year removed Las Vegas from a list of 35 cities eligible for special anti-terrorism grants even though Gonzales said Las Vegas was a "magnet for terrorists."

Las Vegas has since been put back on the list.

In addition, Ensign said, none of the 71 employees in the U.S. attorney's office in Nevada has had a pay raise in the last four years. He said Congress authorized 82 employees in the U.S. attorney's office in Nevada as far back as 2002.

Of the eight U.S. attorneys who were fired, Bogden was "on the bubble," and would not have been removed under a better evaluation system, Ensign said.

"I don't think Dan Bogden would be re-appointed as a U.S. attorney, but I am calling on (the Justice Department and the White House) to re-establish his credibility in the legal community by whatever means necessary," Ensign said.

Ensign said he "emphatically" does not believe Bogden was fired because of any investigation of political officials in Nevada. Gov. Jim Gibbons, R-Nev., is being investigated for his financial dealings with federal contractor Warren Trepp.

Despite his unhappiness with the Justice Department, Ensign said he was not bothered by reports of the White House's involvement in the dismissal of the U.S. attorneys.

"Since the president appoints them and has the power to remove them, the White House should absolutely be involved," Ensign said.

Calls to the Justice Department, the White House and Bogden were not returned.

Reid joined a growing number of Democratic senators calling for Gonzales' resignation.

"It appears he's over his head in this job," Reid said. "My vote (against Gonzales' confirmation on Feb. 3, 2005) was right. He should not have been confirmed as attorney general."

Two years ago, Reid recommended Harriet Miers, who was then White House counsel, for the U.S. Supreme Court seat now occupied by Justice Samuel Alito.

Asked whether he would still endorse Miers, who has been linked to the dismissal of the eight U.S. attorneys, Reid laughed.

"I think Harriet Miers would be better than who we have on there now," Reid said. "She'd be better than Alito."